

Introduction

The Comparative Politics of Sexuality in Latin America

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POLITICAL SCIENTISTS who study Latin America have not been sufficiently attentive to the genesis of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) politics and tribulations in the region. Few studies on LGBT issues in Latin America have been published in political science journals in the United States. This is not the case in sociology, anthropology, history, and cultural studies, in which LGBT issues have become highly theorized and almost obligatory subjects of study. The inattention to LGBT politics by political scientists seems inexplicable given the field's preeminent role in studying issues of state formation, citizenship, democratization, civil rights, inclusionary politics, bargaining, social movements, identity, public policy, and more recently, issues surrounding the quality of democracy. Political scientists who study Latin America have produced novel theories and empirical studies on each of these subfields. Few of them have focused on LGBT issues.

The paucity of studies on LGBT politics in Latin America could give the impression that LGBT groups and issues are insignificant in the region's politics. The purpose of this reader is to show otherwise. Collectively these readings demonstrate that LGBT topics have been salient affairs in Latin American politics during the current "third wave of democratization," as well as in previous waves.

This reader assembles complete or excerpted works by scholars, analysts, activists, and politicians on the politics of advancing LGBT rights. We tried to select works that were written in the 2000s and to ensure as much regional and thematic coverage as possible. The authors exhibit variations in disciplinary training, theoretical bent, methodological approach, country of origin, and units of analysis, yet, despite these differences, they share two beliefs. First, the authors agree that LGBT politics cannot be omitted from the study of democratization. If democracy is inconceivable in the absence of respect for “cultural diversity” and “the right to difference” (Hagopian 2007), the authors in this reader would insist that LGBT rights are fundamental components of diversity and difference. In essence, the authors are united behind the idea that there is a fundamental “democratic right to sexuality” (Raupp Rios 2005; Raupp Rios this volume). Second, they agree that studying LGBT politics offers different and sometimes new insights about the democratization process—how it advances, stagnates, or reverses. These are insights that are not easy to visualize when studying other social groups claiming rights. In short, LGBT affairs are essential and distinct topics of democratization.

What do these works reveal collectively? At the risk of downplaying the diversity of ideas contained in this reader, we identify two major themes. First, the struggle for LGBT rights in Latin America has made unprecedented inroads in the first decade of the twenty-first century, but not in every domain, nor everywhere in the region. In several countries and cities, it is now common to find laws and policies against discrimination based on sexual orientation, legal recognition of same-sex couples and gender changes, policies against homophobia, and the inclusion of LGBT activists within government. In many other domains, regions, or countries, there has been little progress, if any. Several pieces in this reader document and seek to explain this uneven progress.

Second, these inroads, where they have occurred, were long in coming, far longer than one would have expected given the progress achieved by LGBT groups in many democracies elsewhere, and the progress achieved by other social movements in Latin America (see Baldez, Thayer in this volume). Furthermore, it is unclear whether inroads will continue to be made or even endure. Many of the readings here discuss the factors that have hindered and may continue to hinder the progress of LGBT movements in the region.

This reader is therefore about the uneven and late achievement of LGBT rights in Latin America, and the potential for that achievement to stagnate. In this introduction, we would like to offer some insights, drawn mostly from our authors, about these topics. We begin with a brief conceptualization of LGBT politics in democratization studies, and then proceed to a discussion of the political factors that have blocked or propelled LGBT rights in the region.

Fighting Heteronormativity

At its core, LGBT politics is about challenging heteronormativity. This term refers to the tendency of societies to organize social relations and citizen rights based on the notion that reproductive heterosexuality is ideal. In most contemporary societies, leaders and opinion makers often apply the standard of reproductive heterosexuality in judging a person's worth and eligibility for rewards such as acceptance, inheritance, pensions, social status, welfare benefits, and job promotions. Heteronormativity imposes on individuals the expectation of having sexual and affective partnerships with members of the opposite sex, raising children in heterosexual environments, and performing gender-based roles that align with traditional (binary) or majoritarian definitions of *male* and *female*.

LGBT politics focuses on creating a safe space for individuals who do not conform to these heteronormative expectations. These include people who feel attraction to members of the same sex (gays, lesbians, and bisexuals); those whose gender identity and/or expression depart from binary canons (female vs. male, heterosexual vs. homosexual) and those who feel that their "nature-given anatomy," their identity attributed at birth, or both are in conflict with their true gender identity (Pecheny 2008, 14).

A heteronormative environment is typically uncomfortable with diversity. This discomfort affects nonconforming individuals not just at the psychological level, but also politically. Heteronormativity places all nonconforming citizens within any polity at high risk of feeling or actually experiencing exclusion, denigration, discrimination, ostracism, victimization by hate crime, forced migration, and neglect by state security and welfare policies. LGBT politics is therefore the struggle against the conditions that give rise to these experiences and the feeling of living with the threat of these experiences.

Distinguishing among Desires, Identities, Public Expressions, and Practices

Although LGBT social movements and citizens may be united in their opposition to heteronormativity, not all share the same political concerns. Scholars face a number of complications in trying to classify the array of concerns for all LGBT citizens (see Moreno in this volume for a discussion of the complexity of identity and politics in the Buenos Aires GLTTB movement). These complications arise from the occasionally overlapping nature of some of these concerns. One way to understand these complications is to think in terms of the differences between desires, sexual practices, identities, and behaviors (see table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Heteronormativity and nonheteronormativity: desire, identity, and expression

	<i>Desire (sexual orientation)</i>	<i>(Self-)identity</i>	<i>Gender and identity expression vis-à-vis others</i>
Heterosexual	Predominant or exclusive attraction to the opposite sex (includes asexual individuals by default)	May not be an issue	May or may not deviate from heteronormativity (e.g., macho/effeminate men; tomboy/feminine women)
Homosexual (men are referred to as gays; women, as lesbians)	Predominant or exclusive attraction to the same sex	May or may not consider him- or herself a LGBT individual	May or may not deviate from heteronormativity (e.g., macho/effeminate men; tomboy/feminine women), with one caveat: may display different degrees of "outness" in the family, work and community
Bisexual (women and men)	Attraction to the opposite and the same sex	May or may not consider him- or herself a LGBT individual	May or may not deviate from heteronormativity (e.g., macho/effeminate men; tomboy/feminine women), with one caveat: may display different degrees of "outness" in the family, work and community
Transgender (women and men)	May or may not be an issue	Rejects the gender identity that was assigned at birth	May or may not deviate from heteronormativity (e.g., macho/effeminate men; tomboy/feminine women), with one caveat: may display different degrees of "outness" in the family, work and community
Transsexual (women and men)	May or may not be an issue	Rejects the gender identity that was assigned at birth	Changes appearance, and maybe anatomy
Effeminate men and masculine women	Attraction to the opposite and/or the same sex	May or may not be an issue	Mannerisms deviate from heteronormative standards
Intersex	May or may not be an issue	May or may not be an issue	May or may not change anatomy, but experiences social pressure to possess physical anatomy, particularly genitalia, that match male or female heteronormative standards

For gay men and lesbians, the main political concerns tend to be the ability to express their sexual orientations or desires without discrimination or any other social penalty, and to have their sexual and loving relationships be socially recognized. Sexual orientation refers to a person's capacity for profound emotional, affectionate, and sexual relations with others (The Yogyakarta Principles 2007). Men who experience same-sex desire predominantly are often referred to as *gays*, and same-sex attracted women are referred to as *lesbians*. If they experience this desire for both women and men, they are referred to as *bisexual*. Notice that the translation of desires into sexual practices is not crucial: homosexuals, like heterosexuals, may practice celibacy, monogamy, nonmonogamy, or frequent changes in sexual partners. What is crucial for defining gay/lesbian sexual orientation is a preponderance of desire for emotional, affectionate, and sexual relations with members of the same sex, although denominations and terms for these orientations may differ across cultures, generations, and settings. Multiple local denominations exist across societies and within sexual subcultures.

For transgendered individuals, on the other hand, the main issue is the recognition of their gender identity, and the end of their exclusion from almost every social domain of life (education, employment, social networks). Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt internal and individual sense of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex/gender assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body. To them, the key issue is self-identification (what is between their ears), more than their sex (what is between their legs) (Girshick 2008). Transgender individuals may or may not choose to modify bodily appearance or function (by medical, surgical, or other means) or alter expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms (The Yogyakarta Principles 2007). They depart from heteronormativity on the basis of identity, but not necessarily in any other category in table 1.1.

Some people wish to adapt their appearances (partially or fully, permanently or occasionally, anatomically and/or through clothing and makeup) and social identities (beginning with their names) away from the gender identities attributed to them at birth, to reflect their true gender identities. Citizens with this desire are called *transgender*, *transvestite*, or *transsexual*. Those who undergo deeper forms of change in their gender expression, for instance, those who engage in anatomical change or hormone therapy, dislike the term *change of sex* to describe their transition, preferring instead to state that they have "adapted" their genitalia and/or physical appearance to their true gender and sexual identities. Many transgenders stop referring to themselves as *transsexuals* after they complete their "transition," preferring instead to be called *men* or *women*. However, this process of adaptation may or may not proceed according to binary terms (i.e., *male* or *female*, as exclusive alternatives); it may include elements that could be called *feminine* and elements that could be called *masculine*. A school of thought typically denominated as the "queer approach" specifically

challenges the idea that gender and sexuality are binary: male and female, masculine and feminine, straight and gay, and so on.

Some scholars talk about gender as a cultural and social construction of (biological) sexual difference, while others affirm that gender language precedes even the understanding of material bodies: one “sees” bodies only through received gender lenses, and gender differences and practices are continually performed. According to this perspective, the discussion about whether gender attributes correspond or not to each “sex” is pointless, since there is no “sex” outside or before gender constructions. In a heteronormative construction of sex and gender, there are two sexes and two genders, and individuals are expected to conform more or less to this binary construction. Looking through a nonheteronormative lens, however, one perceives that gender varies along a continuum.

Recently, in Latin America, transvestites have become politically visible in relation to sex work and their encounters with the police. Cultural and psychosocial factors, as well as factors related to the impossibility of entering the job market, have made sex work almost the exclusive source of income for female transgender individuals. In everyday life, transgendered people suffer multiple forms of hardship: transphobia (irrational aversion to transgenderism), intolerance toward sex work, police abuse in the form of “rape, assault, and extortion,” poverty, underemployment, exposure to HIV/AIDS, and crime. These forms of oppression act in synergy (Human Rights Watch 2009; Parker and Aggleton 2003; Modarelli in this volume).

While identity is an unavoidable issue for transgendered citizens, it is not necessarily salient for all LGB individuals. Having same-sex desires and behaviors does not necessarily produce LGB identities. Some citizens exhibiting LGB desires and behaviors actually expend great efforts disguising their desires from others to avoid being assigned a label. LGB citizens might not necessarily develop an LGB identity or even a public expression of their desires. Though same-sex desires have been recorded for millennia, LGB identities are more recent and vary across historical periods, cultures, and even circles of friends, indicating that expression is not a necessary outgrowth of LGB desires (Balderston and Guy 1997; Sigal 2003; Gutiérrez 2007). In some other cases, gender expression is also at stake: for effeminate men, for instance, as well as for masculine women (regardless of sexual orientation and/or actual sexual practices), especially during childhood and adolescence, harassment and discrimination may occur because of this apparent incoherence between their gender identities as men or as women and their respective effeminate or masculine manners.

Intersex people comprise yet another group negatively affected by heteronormativity. *Intersex* is a general term to describe a person who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that

doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy

on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. (Intersex Society of North America 2009)

Scientists estimate conservatively that at least 1.7 percent of people are born with a possible intersexual condition (*The Economist*, 2009). In most countries, surgery to “normalize” sexual appearance as either male or female is often performed. In adulthood, intersex people may come to regret this decision for a number of reasons (not least because one possible consequence of surgery is diminished sexual sensitiveness and sterility). Others who did not undergo surgery may choose surgery in adulthood.

Finally, women fighting heteronormativity often contend that they are simultaneously fighting other more primordial issues, such as patriarchalism and gender hierarchy, which can be considered part of heteronormativity. Because homophobia directed at women combines both heteronormative standards and patriarchalism, women often feel that homophobia directed at them is more hostile than that directed at males; lesbians also find fewer public gathering spaces in which to meet than do gay and bisexual men (see Friedman; Babb; Guinea, Desh, and Peroni in this volume).

It is crucial to reiterate that desire and identity are different from actual behavior. Not all gay, lesbian, and bisexual desires translate into gay, lesbian, and bisexual practices or public behaviors. Likewise, not all transgender identities produce actual efforts to change and adapt, cosmetically or bodily, one’s gender appearance. In short, many individuals with same-sex desires and many transgender individuals opt not to engage in LGBT practices or public behaviors.

The Politics of Advancing LGBT Rights: Small Minorities and Large Closets

The starting point of LGBT politics (and of LGBT individuals acting in ordinary politics) is the realization that, in a heteronormative society, converting LGBT desires and identities into actual behaviors and expressions entails costs, obstacles, and risks. These costs, obstacles, and risks may be expected to cause enough trauma to preclude actual LGBT behaviors and expressions. Heteronormativity thus conspires against the fundamental freedoms of expression and association.

Politics, together with social hostility, thus influence LGBT behavior and identity, though generally not desires. This means that a nonheteronormative environment may lead to freer LGBT expressions, but it will not make heterosexual individuals suddenly experience homosexual desires. Degrees of recognition and tolerance, socialization, and legal practices shape a person’s self-acceptance (the degree to which one acknowledges homosexual attractions or a challenging gender identity), activities

(the degree to which one engages in homosexual sex and loving relationships), and expression (the degree to which one decides to hide fully, hide partially, reveal partially, or reveal openly one's nonconformance to heteronormativity) (see Espinosa Miñoso in this volume for a discussion of the link between lesbianism and feminist activism). Politics will not fix or change a person's sexual orientation, but politics can influence identity and expression, as shown in table 1.1.

This brings us to a dilemma in LGBT politics. For LGBT rights to advance in any society, it is necessary for a group of LGBT rights-demanders to coalesce. However, such a group is likelier to coalesce when nonheterosexual individuals publicly develop LGBT (or other nonheterosexual) public identities (see Brown in this volume). This raises a double paradox: first, LGBT citizens must challenge the notion that sexualities and gender identities are fixed (i.e., sexual and gender boundaries are more “inessential” and “fluid” than is conventionally believed), but at the same time, they must develop strong identities themselves to gain political power (Gamson 1995). Second, a comfort zone seems to be a prior necessity for these identities to form. Thus, advancing LGBT rights presupposes an expansion of LGBT identity, and yet, this expansion of LGBT identity is likelier if there are minimal political opportunities for it to surface. A crucial element of LGBT politics consists of figuring out how to escape from this conundrum.

Yet another dilemma in the politics of LGBT rights has to do with the problem of numbers. According to most social movement theories, there is a strong connection between numbers and power. The greater the number of adherents, real or perceived, to any given cause, the greater the chance of influencing politics. This poses a dilemma for LGBT politics in three ways.

First, the proportion of the population comprised by LGBT citizens is typically a minority, even if we suspect that people who do not conform to heteronormative standards could in theory constitute a large group. The smallness of this population represents a structural impediment to the bargaining leverage of LGBT groups in any political struggle. As an interest group participating in democratic politics, LGBT groups will never constitute a large group, and thus, will never achieve sufficient influence unless they acquire allies within other societal groups (see Brown, Green in this volume). Moreover, minority status means not only (or mainly) a small size, but also relegation to “minoritization” or subordinate status through some type of political process.

Second, the possibility of hiding one's desires, identity, and behavior (an available option for most gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, but not for transgenders) and of managing one's public identity make the structural impediment of small numbers even more restricting. The closet (the informal practice endemic to LGB citizens of disguising their LGB behaviors and identities) hurts the strength of LGBT forces in ways that are not relevant among many other nondominant groups. Most people who are discrim-

inated against based on physical appearance (e.g., targets of racism, ageism, nativism, sexism) cannot easily hide their physical appearance, and thus do not have the closet option, but LGB people can avoid the stigma by staying—totally or partially—in the closet. Almost all LGB people, at some point or another, especially in their younger years, engage in some form of effort to remain undetected, to “pass” as heterosexual (i.e., conforming to heteronormativity). Hiding is the first thing LGB individuals and groups learn to do when they begin to experience heteronormativity and think about gender and sexual public expression. Some LGB people pursue the closet option for a very long time, even an entire lifetime. The closet is a seeming safe haven for many LGB citizens, but it is a serious impediment to overcoming the small-constituency problem inherent in LGB politics. To use the language of public choice theories, the closet option is tantamount to the “free rider problem” as an obstacle to collective action: the closet means that a large number of people are unwilling to shoulder the costs of action, thus thwarting the capacity of associations to mobilize constituents and affect policy.

Third, sexual categories are not a priori social groups with identifiable bonds and settings. Often, members of social groups are visible to each other: workers may form unions, or members of religious minorities may worship at the same place. In contrast, because sexuality is a feature mainly expressed in intimate settings, members of sexual social groups are not necessarily visible. Establishing social (and political) bonds requires an active effort of visibility, internal and external (see Pecheny, “Sociability, Secrets, and Identities: Key Issues in Sexual Politics in Latin America,” in this volume for further discussion of the closet and how the “secret” of homosexuality influences realms of sociability).

A central issue of LGBT politics is therefore fighting not just homophobic institutions and attitudes, but also what Eskridge has called the “apartheid of the closet,” that is, the tendency of LGBT people themselves to seek the closet in order to find security and freedom (Eskridge 1999). The paradox of LGBT politics is that the closet might be a necessary place for citizens to enter, at least occasionally, in order to find protection and even freedom, but staying in the closet undermines the prospects for LGBT activism, since it reduces the number of adherents to the cause, impeding the achievement of greater protection and freedom.

However serious, it is important not to overstate the problems posed by smallness of group size and closet issues. There are plenty of examples of small interest groups in democracies that become influential in politics. We know from public choice theories since Mancur Olson (1965; see also Becker 1983) that small associations enjoy advantages that allow them to capture policy. A lot depends on each group’s internal organization, the nature of its demands, its tactics, its allies and foes across society, and larger structural issues such as overall economic conditions. We will turn our attention to these endogenous and exogenous factors and how they have influenced

the bargaining leverage of Latin America's LGBT movements. But first, we offer a review of progress thus far.

Latin America's Coming Out in the 2000s

During the first decade and a half after the return to democracy (early 1980s through mid 1990s), LGBT issues in Latin America remained in the closet or were discussed only in very small circles. Unquestionably, autocratic rule was not generally gay friendly. In Brazil and Argentina, some tiny but visible "homosexual liberation groups" emerged in the 1970s and took a beating from authoritarian regimes. In Cuba, LGBT citizens were placed in labor camps in the 1960s. Yet, the transition to democracy was not that progay either, at least initially. Shortly after the transition to democracy, LGBT movements were in early stages or heavily wounded. They thus had less visibility and impact than other social movements. A combination of a false sense of triumph (the new democratization), other priorities (framing new political institutions, dealing with past human-rights violations, economic travails), and the overall weakness of LGBT movements in the region meant that LGBT rights in the early 1980s and 1990s did not advance greatly.

However, since the late 1990s, Latin America has experienced a significant "coming-out" experience, albeit not evenly. LGBT issues have become more openly debated topics in most countries (at least in some circles), and more importantly, the political and legal environment in favor of LGBT rights has begun to expand in some countries (see Raupp Rios in this volume for a legal analysis of LGBT rights in Latin America).

In 1998, for instance, Ecuador adopted a new constitution that included protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 1999, Chile decriminalized same-sex intercourse. In 2000, Rio de Janeiro's state legislature banned sexual-orientation-based discrimination in public and private establishments. In 2002, the city of Buenos Aires guaranteed all couples, regardless of gender, the right to register their civil unions. In 2003, Mexico passed a federal antidiscrimination law that includes sexual orientation. In 2004, the government of Brazil initiated *Brasil sem Homofobia* (Brazil without Homophobia), a comprehensive program combining the resources of NGOs and government agencies to change social attitudes toward LGBT people. In 2006, Mexico City approved the Cohabitation Law, granting same-sex couples marital rights identical to those established for common-law relationships between men and women. In 2007, Uruguay passed a new law granting access to health benefits, inheritance, parenting rights, and pension rights to all couples who have cohabited for at least five years, and Bogotá and other Colombian cities established public policies specifically addressed to LGBT populations. In 2008, Nicaragua reformed its penal code to decriminalize same-sex relations, and Cuba's new president, Raúl Castro, authorized free sex-change operations for qualifying citizens. The 2008 LGBT parade in São Paulo,

Brazil, was attended by more than three million people, making it the biggest public gathering in Brazilian history, bigger even than those at the time of *Directas Já!* (the massive civil movement demanding direct presidential elections in 1984), and the largest LGBT demonstration in the world. And at the end of 2009, Mexico and Argentina moved forward with same-sex marriage (see appendix timeline in this volume).

Policy areas have also seen progress. By 2007, for instance, approximately three-quarters of persons needing antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS in the Americas were receiving that treatment—the highest coverage in the developing world (Pan American Health Organization 2007). As some pieces in this reader indicate, this is a triumph for LGBT movements and patients, many of whom have concentrated on this policy issue. Furthermore, Latin American cities are becoming increasingly “gay friendly,” defined as having a high density of LGBT establishments per capita. In some cases, Latin American cities score higher than richer cities in other democracies (see Corrales in this volume). Large cities like Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City, as well as smaller cities like Puerto Vallarta and San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, often rank high as LGBT destinations in international travel guides. Academically, LGBT studies have become part of higher education in Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, and Chile.

LGBT issues have thus become increasingly salient in Latin America and are part of public debate and political contestation. This is astounding because levels of homophobia in the region, we now know for sure, are profound. A survey by Americas-Barometer, the only survey of public opinion and democratic behavior that covers all of the Americas, hosted by Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, revealed shocking degrees of homophobia across the region. People in 2006–07 were asked whether they approve or disapprove of the right of homosexuals to run for public office. In Canada and the United States, a large majority expressed approval (76.2 and 69.7 percent, respectively). In Latin American countries, except Mexico, Brazil, and Uruguay, the vast majority, sometimes more than 60 percent of respondents, disapproved of extending this basic democratic right to homosexuals (Orces 2008). The survey was not asking whether to extend homosexuals the right to marriage, adoption, inheritance, and pensions, which are typically controversial, but simply, the right to run for office. Homophobia in the region is so profound that it gives rise to public support for suppressing basic democratic rights. Given this attitudinal context, the region’s achievements in advancing LGBT rights seem remarkable.

Two key questions are worth highlighting. First, why did this coming-out experience occur at this particular historical moment? Second, will the progress continue? Answering these questions requires looking more closely at the factors that tend to promote or retard the expansion of LGBT issues worldwide and in Latin America in particular, and that shape the specific patterns of these processes.

In the following sections, we focus on the extent to which Latin America, as a whole, may differ from other democratic regions in terms of the following: (1) pro-

longed homestay, which, given that homophobia begins at home, tends to distort and delay the rise of a gay identity; (2) the dilemmas faced by independent youths; (3) the availability of the closet(s); (4) the role of income and competing economic issues; (5) the role of shocks and horrors in drawing attention to LGBT rights; (6) the role of religion; and (7) the difficult interaction between political parties and LGBT social movements.

Homophobia Begins at Home

A key problem facing LGBT movements in Latin America is the extent to which young people, typically the biggest engines of social movements, live with their parents or extended families. The problem with this living arrangement is that it exposes too many young people to a type of discrimination that is not that common among members of other nondominant groups in any society: household discrimination (see Pecheny, “Sociability, Secrets, and Identities,” in this volume). Usually, the most feared and cruelest forms of homophobia begin at home or in small towns. A major trauma for many LGBT youths is that the very people who are closest (affectively and biologically)—immediate relatives—are the ones who have the hardest time accepting LGBT identities and practices.

Evidence of household-based discrimination for LGBT citizens in Latin America is growing. A survey of participants in the Buenos Aires 2005 gay pride march revealed that 26.5 percent of respondents felt “excluded and marginalized by their families” (Jones, Libson, and Hiller 2006) (see figure 1). This was the third most frequent form of discrimination, preceded by discrimination by “teachers and classmates” and discrimination by “neighbors.” A similar survey of participants in the 2007 gay pride march in Santiago, Chile, placed the number even higher: 29.8 percent of participants report having “felt excluded or marginalized within their family” (Barrientos et al. 2008). The Santiago survey goes further by providing data for different subgroups: for lesbians, the percentage increases to 33.8 percent; for transgendered people, the percentage is 47.4 percent. The survey also reveals that 70.8 percent have been subjected to “verbal aggressions” and 22.8 to “physical aggression.” A 2005 survey in Mexico revealed that 21 percent of surveyed LGBT individuals felt they were denied jobs, 11 percent felt they were denied access to a school, and 30 percent felt they were discriminated against by the police (Figueroa 2006). In Colombia, a survey asked people to state whom they would prefer not to have as neighbors; the answers included “thieves, paramilitaries, ex guerrillas, prostitutes, homosexuals, and people with AIDS” (Salazar 2006).

For most people suffering discrimination and exclusion, such as members of religious or racial minorities, the household normally serves as a safe haven in an otherwise inhospitable world. Black parents, for instance, do not reject black children for being black—on the contrary, they often teach them how to cope with outside dis-

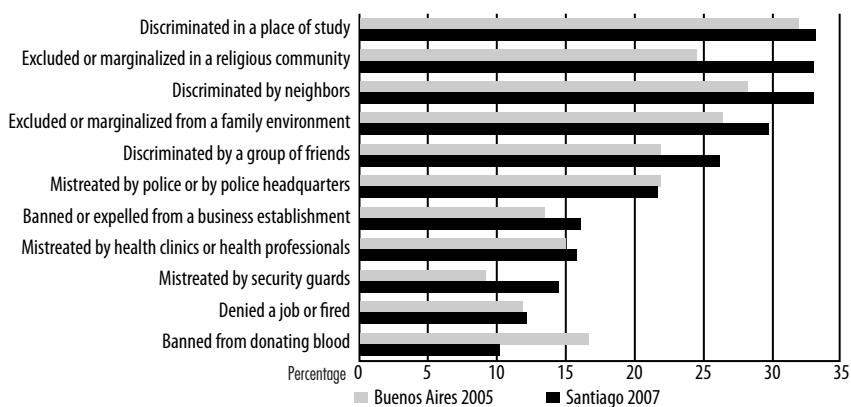


Figure 1. Survey of participants in gay pride marches

crimination. In contrast, straight parents may have intense reactions to their children’s deviations from heteronormativity, sometimes more intense than their reactions to strangers’ deviations. For transgender youths, rejection is much stronger, and thus, the incidence of migration to other cities or countries and severing of ties with families of origin are more frequent.

Of course, there are exceptions. The 1985 Mexican movie, *Doña Herlinda y su hijo* (*Doña Herlinda and Her Son*), depicts the story of a mother in Guadalajara who tolerates her gay son and his male lover. But the fact that the film draws humor from a mother’s acceptance is a testament to how unusual this practice is. Furthermore, the acceptance in the movie comes with certain conditions: the son must still marry a woman and keep his gay relationship secret, suggesting household tolerance more for what we could call an “open closet” than for open LGBT behavior per se (further discussed below).

In general, therefore, LGBT citizens, in contrast to many others within nondominant social categories, are likelier to find the household to be an uncomfortable and even unsafe environment—a place where it is dangerous to exhibit LGBT desires, identities, and behaviors, and where discrimination can bring about the direst consequences, such as ostracism, harassment, mistreatments, even economic destitution. However, household and parental homophobia is not always cruel or long-lasting. Frequently, household environments do change for the better, becoming quite supportive. But it is hard for most young LGBT citizens to discount household homophobia, at least initially. Coming out to parents and close relatives is typically a nerve-racking experience that individuals from other nondominant groups seldom experience, and LGBT youths must confront this hardship early in their lives.

Latin American Youths Stay Home Longer

In high-income, advanced democracies, a typical solution to the problem of “homophobia begins at home” is household exodus: LGBT youths leave their homes, sometimes their hometowns, in search of greater freedom, new experiences, and supportive groups. But for LGBT individuals in Latin America, this exit option is considerably less prevalent. The 2007 Santiago gay pride poll revealed that 51.3 percent of participants lived with “a mother, a father, or both”; 81 percent of those in that category were in the 18–25-year-old age group (Barrientos et al. 2008). In Buenos Aires, 62.3 percent of 20–24-year-olds and 34.3 percent of 25–29-year-olds lived with “parents and relatives” (Jones, Libson, and Hiller 2006). In Latin America, it seems, the household exit option is not as prevalent for LGB people, even in higher-income countries like Argentina and Chile. This may not be the case for transgendered youths, many of whom report household exodus. But for the vast majority of LGB people in their early twenties, and a large majority of LGB people in their late twenties, household exodus is atypical.

There are several reasons for this stay-with-family phenomenon. First, incomes are lower and job opportunities are scarcer for young citizens in Latin America. Young people cannot, therefore, afford an independent lifestyle. Second, families still expect unmarried children to stay within the household, either as a cultural preference or out of economic necessity. Third, many cities and towns have a housing shortage, forcing different generations to share dwellings (see Larson in this volume).

Table 1.2 shows differences in household structure, comparing Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States. The table shows that the exodus option is relatively rare in the general population in Latin America. The share of people living alone is less than one-third of those in the United States. Most of these live-alone youths are concentrated in the urban areas of Argentina and Uruguay (Arriagada 2004). Latin Americans in the bottom three deciles of income rarely live alone—less than 2 percent, in contrast to the 6–7 percent figure of the United States (Inter-American Development Bank 1998, 65). Evidence from Colombia, Chile, and Mexico shows that 80 percent of young adults still live with their “family of origin” rather than within their “own family,” resulting in “delayed autonomy” (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean 2004, 27). Most Latin American youths (between 70 and 90 percent) live in nuclear (two parents) or extended households (another relative in addition to parents) (Inter-American Development Bank 1998). In the United States in 2003, in contrast, 55 percent of adults aged 18–24 years old lived with at least one parent, most likely in a nuclear family (rarely an extended family). The percentage drops to 10 percent among adults 25–34 years old (Fields 2004). In Latin America, where extended families are still more prevalent, typically a grandparent constitutes this third person in extended families, suggesting that more youths in Latin America live with older-generation relatives. Insofar as homophobia is stronger

Table 1.2. Structure of households, United States (2003), Latin America (2002), and the Caribbean (2002)

	<i>Latin America and the Caribbean (%)</i>	<i>United States (%)</i>
Single-headed households	8.4	26.4
Nonnuclear households	4.8	6.1
Nuclear families (two parents with children)	42.8	23.5
Nuclear without children (married childless couple or two parents)	7.7	28.2
Extended families (parents and at least one more relative) and composite families (at least one nonrelative, not including domestic workers, resides in the household)	22*	No data
Youth old enough to live independently, but living with original family	70–90†	45‡

Sources: For Latin America and the Caribbean, Arriagada (2004); for United States, Census Bureau (Fields 2004).
 * estimate; † age of youth group unspecified; ‡ 18–24 years old.

among older-generation adults (Kornblit et al. 1997), the prevalence of extended families in Latin America suggests that heteronormative pressures on Latin American youths are greater.

Whatever the reasons, household exodus is limited in Latin America, and the average Latin American household is more intergenerational. This situation has implications for LGBT politics. It means that many young people are exposed to household discrimination, possibly delaying or inhibiting LGBT behaviors, identities, and expression, potentially causing more trauma among LGBT youths in Latin America than in other democracies. As a generalization, one could say that LGBT youths in the United States leave their households, whereas in Latin America, they stay home, complicating their coming-out experience. The number of young LGBT people who feel ready to join a political struggle on behalf of LGBT rights is relatively small—youths in Latin America may still be hiding their nonheterosexuality from their parents and even themselves.

Household Exodus Brings Problems

While youth household exodus is limited in Latin America, when it does occur, it may bring its own set of problems that can hinder the rise of LGBT groups. Given the lack of job and housing opportunities for young people in Latin America, poor young people living outside their families in Latin America face onerous economic problems. Furthermore, there is evidence that household exodus among low-income young people may lead to street living. In Honduras and Nicaragua, for instance, the World

Bank calculates that 8–12 percent of all children below the age of 18 are working or living in the streets—or both. These household leavers come from poverty and stay in poverty.

Latin America's street youths might be free from household homophobia—and relatively free to engage in sex (and sex work)—but they are nonetheless burdened by new hardships such as poverty, crime, abandonment, teenage pregnancy, and overall insecurity, as famously depicted in the 1981 Brazilian movie *Pixote*. These street youths become *disconnected*, a term used in the United States to refer to citizens who are disengaged from productive activities, such as employment and schooling, and thus are not preparing for a self-sufficient life.

Disconnected street youths in Latin America may display LGBT behavior, but do not necessarily harbor a positive LGBT identity or the will and chance to be part of any LGBT civic group. They are too preoccupied with other difficulties of life, detached not only from productive activity, but from civil society in general. They are not necessarily available for political mobilization.

Class difference reveals itself here. For some reason, there are more transgender expressions in the lower strata of society, and these transgenders have less to lose from household exodus. Middle-class people, in contrast, are less likely to choose household exodus, and there are fewer known transgenders in this income group (Kulick 1998; Berkins and Fernández 2005; Berkins 2008; Fernández in this volume).

A more drastic form of exodus is emigration. The need to leave a country to escape homophobia is a topic that, not surprisingly, appears frequently in novels (see Foster 2002) and movies with LGBT themes in Latin America (e.g., *No se lo digas a nadie* [*Don't Tell Anyone*], *Conducta impropia* [*Improper Conduct*], *Fresa y chocolate* [*Strawberries and Chocolate*], *Antes que anochezca* [*Before Night Falls*], *XXY*). Immigration affords LGBT Latin Americans a chance at relief from an array of hardships, such as poor economic opportunities, political persecution, and societal and household homophobia, but pursuing this chance comes with very high costs and risks: the costs of leaving one's own community and the risks of crossing tough immigration barriers and adapting to an alien environment (see Ocasio in this volume). Emigration also brings the risk of turning LGBT people into “double minorities” (immigrants and non-heterosexuals) and thus plunging them into double hardships. In both *No se lo digas a nadie* and *XXY*, the main LGBT characters, from Peru and Argentina, respectively, are in the end unable to find safety through emigration (for Mexicans in the United States, see Carrillo et al. 2008).

Latin America's Multiple Closets

An ancient route through which young people “exit” household-based heteronormativity and discrimination is heterosexual marriage. This exit strategy—again, his-

torically pervasive among LGBT people worldwide—raises the issue of closet living. The more “comfortable” the closet in any given society, or alternatively, the more closet options there are, and the higher the perceived costs of coming out, the fewer the number of citizens available for mobilization for LGBT rights. It is precisely because of this inverse relationship between closet options and power that LGBT movements worldwide devote efforts to encouraging people to come out, and that pride marches often focus on the issue of visibility.

In some Latin American societies, not only are the pressures to remain hidden stronger, but the closet options are arguably more “comfortable” and abundant than in Europe or in the United States. Societies vary according to the number of ways in which people can hide their LGBT sexuality in order to be accepted by heteronormative standards. In Latin America, heterosexual married life can become compatible with closet homosexual practices in a number of ways. Many anthropologists and sociologists argue that there are multiple “closet options” available. In addition to the standard closet of simply disguising one’s own desire, identity, and behavior, the following closets exist:

1. The marital-life closet, linked to a gendered double standard (what is expected for a man versus for a woman): the degree to which a spouse tolerates extramarital affairs, heterosexual or otherwise
2. The good-parent closet: the idea that as long as a parent is a reliable provider in the household, any behavior outside the family is tolerated
3. The top-versus-bottom closet: the idea that as long as one performs certain sexual roles and not others, one need not be considered LGBT. For instance, in some circles, a sexual penetrator, a nonkisser, or simply the man who sets the rules of sexual activity can still be considered compliant with heteronormativity

Michael Musto has argued that in the United States this tolerance for semihidden LGBT behavior, what he calls the “glass closet,” is mostly associated with Hollywood celebrities (2007). But it seems that in Latin America the “glass closet” is available to many more citizens, especially in upper income brackets.

The 1998 Peruvian film *No se lo digas a nadie*, based on the novel by journalist Jaime Bayly, offers examples of all three glass closets. In the movie, a young gay man from Lima’s upper middle class faces discrimination by family and society as an “out” homosexual; however, he gains reacceptance by the end of the movie by tacitly promising to live according to heteronormative standards, even though his peers, family, and potential girlfriend know perfectly well that he will lead a double life. The young man is afforded this “luxury” of a double life because he will be discreet and, it seems, is willing to fulfill the other functions of heterosexual matrimony. In addition, there are scenes in which some of his sexual partners reject a gay self-identity, despite their sexual orientation, in part because of the role they play while having sex.

For women, these multiple closets might be less available than for men, which may create fewer freedoms for lesbians (see Friedman in this volume). On the other hand, friendship between two women has served as a form of camouflage for loving homosexual relations, practiced by lesbians who have children or are divorced from men. In Latin America, this camouflage has historically been more easily accepted for women than for men.

Although one could argue these closets and camouflages are becoming less available in general, they have not disappeared, and in some circles, they remain quite prevalent (Pecheny, “Sociability, Secrets, and Identities” in this volume). Insofar as visibility is a necessary condition for effective collective action, these multiple closets and forms of camouflage unquestionably hamper the potential progress of LGBT movements. Many potential allies, especially in the middle and upper class, are unavailable as political members of these groups because they enjoy many comfortable closets in which to hide while still finding societal toleration—which is not the same as social acceptance or recognition.

Income Levels and Competing Priorities

Income levels affect LGBT politics in a number of ways. In general, albeit with exceptions, LGBT rights have expanded the most in the world’s richest countries. This makes sense. Social movements, especially those advocating for postmaterialist concerns (i.e., concerns one considers once basic material needs for food, shelter, etc. are met), are likelier to move forward as incomes at the national and individual levels rise. By the same token, poor economic conditions may be associated with fewer opportunities for expansion of LGBT rights. For many citizens, economic problems such as unemployment, poverty, precarious income, lack of job security, and insufficient savings tend to trump issues of sexuality as a political priority. Thus, when economic conditions are precarious within the nation, the community, the household, or the individual’s pocketbook, citizens may be less inclined to treat LGBT issues as a priority. In other words, the struggle for LGBT rights is often a postmaterialist concern: it is likelier to rise to the top of the agenda when material concerns become less urgent (see Thayer in this volume for a discussion of new social movement theory).

This income argument and the existence of larger urban middle-class groups explain why Latin America as a whole has stronger LGBT movements than do Africa and South Asia, but has weaker movements than do most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, where income levels and urban populations are higher (Cáceres et al. 2008).

However, although income conditions in Latin America are producing a more favorable environment for LGBT progress, macroeconomic conditions in general might still be causing delays. Since the late 1980s, Latin America as a whole has been plagued by profound macroeconomic problems such as debt (in the 1970s), inflation and re-

cession (in the 1980s), economic adjustment and financial volatility (in the 1990s), and persistent inequality and poverty (Corrales 2003; Corrales 2008). Voters thus may remain focused on economic issues, rather than LGBT issues. This might explain why LGBT movements and issues took so long to become salient even in the high-income countries of the region: economic issues took precedence. One could argue that as long as the region continues to suffer from serious economic problems, LGBT rights will face strong competition and may remain a secondary concern even among sympathetic people and LGBT people themselves (see Merentes in this volume; Saavedra 2004).

Finally, in the United States, there is evidence suggesting that as a person's socioeconomic status increases, the chances of harboring homophobic attitudes diminishes, in part because improved socioeconomic status yields higher education levels, and homophobia in the United States declines with education (Pew Research Center 2003; Pew Research Center 2006; Pew Research Center 2008). In Latin America, at least traditionally, anthropologists and filmmakers often provide examples of the exact opposite: homophobia is particularly virulent among high-income groups (see *No se lo digas a nadie* and the 2003 Bolivian film *Dependencia sexual* [*Sexual Dependency*]), and tolerance of open LGBT behavior may be more common—though far from widespread—among poor and working-class neighborhoods (see the 2002 Brazilian movie *Madame Satã*, the 2000 Colombian film *La Virgen de los sicarios* [*Our Lady of the Assassins*], and the anthropological study *Mema's House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Machos* [Prieur 1998]). This is consistent with the idea that in Latin America, the upper classes are far more tolerant of “open closets” (acceptance of gay behavior as long as heterosexual stereotypes are observed) than open homosexuality. Whether this income-related difference in attitudes toward homophobia and the closet is pervasive or still in existence, and, if so, why, are topics that require further research.

The Depletion of Shock

The LGBT rights movement, not just in Latin America but throughout the world, suffers from one major impediment: it depends too heavily on the shock effect. The influence of most human-rights social movements on policy increases following moments of national shock. In the area of human rights in Latin America, for instance, the work done by truth and reconciliation commissions in documenting the extent of human-rights abuses during the dictatorships of the 1970s produced in many countries a sense of shock that made possible significant progress in legislation and enforcement of human-rights norms in the 1980s and 1990s.

Likewise, the AIDS epidemic in Latin America had a similar shock effect that drew attention to LGBT movements (Pecheny 2003). The epidemic demonstrated how ill prepared the state was to address the health concerns of and rights of the LGBT com-

munity, one of the first to be affected by the epidemic. It was not surprising that some of the advances in terms of health care, counseling and rights protection for LGBT citizens emerged following the initial onslaught of the AIDS epidemic in Latin America, as elsewhere (Klein 1998; see also Núñez González, Gómez in this volume).

One problem with horror as a propellant of rights is that it is not a sustainable resource. After an initial shock, societies and individuals can learn to live with otherwise horrific conditions. Shock can easily transition into complacency and indifference. This is what has happened with the AIDS epidemic. Now that the epidemic has become more contained—and thus, less shocking—interest in addressing the plight of the LGBT community may have waned in many countries, and may remain low until another shock shakes public opinion. For example, Tim Frasca’s essay in this volume discusses how, with the containment of the AIDS epidemic, society has settled back into traditional patterns.

A similar pattern occurs with hate crimes. There is evidence that LGBT citizens are systematically subjected to not just verbal and physical abuse, but also murder (UNAIDS 2009). The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) reported that a gay man was killed every two days in Latin America in 2005 solely because of his sexuality (*The Economist* 2007). Brazil is often described as leading the world in the murder of homosexuals, with one study documenting 122 homophobic murders in Brazil in 2007, compared with 35 in Mexico and 25 in the United States (Phillips 2008). A previous study claimed that between 1980 and 2006 at least 2,680 gay people were killed in Brazil, mostly as a result of homophobic violence. The problem is that in a region where homicide may be so prevalent, these hate-crime statistics, however horrific, become commonplace and therefore insufficiently disturbing to generate public outcries.

Organized Religion

Social movement strength depends not just on numbers (people available to mobilize) and material resources (income levels), but also on the degree of political obstacles faced. Scholars agree that organized religion poses one of the most powerful political obstacles to sexual rights (Vaggione 2007). Most Christian churches, both in the United States and in Latin America, officially consider homosexual behavior to be immoral and sinful. This doctrinal position translates into an open rejection of LGBT rights. In the Santiago and Buenos Aires surveys of gay pride parade participants, 33.1 percent and 24.6 percent of respondents, respectively, report having been discriminated against by a “religious community” (see figure 1).

The influence of religious institutions, particularly the Catholic Church and Evangelical communities, as forces in opposition to LGBT rights is one major difference between today’s struggle for LGBT rights and many previous democratic struggles in

the Americas, such as ending slavery in the nineteenth century, establishing women's suffrage in the early twentieth century, and advancing labor, human, and indigenous rights since the 1940s. These earlier democratic struggles did not face the same overt, and often virulent, opposition from churches. Many times, in fact, church groups became major advocates on behalf of these democratic struggles. Only feminist and reproductive rights, particularly abortion, face the same type of religious opposition as LGBT rights (Petracci and Pecheny 2007).

Nevertheless, it is incorrect to assume that religion is a homogeneously insuperable barrier to LGBT rights. Both Catholic and Protestant church communities are diverse within and across countries, producing different degrees of opposition. The Catholic Church, for instance, tends to be more influential in the policy arena (lobbying against legislation, restricting discourse, blocking agendas) than in launching witch hunts against LGBT church members. That is, it tends to be more tolerant of lifestyles than of legislation (for a discussion of this distinction as it plays out in Brazil, see Delpotte 2007). In contrast, Protestant churches in the predominantly Catholic countries of Latin America tend to have less influence in the public policy arena (than in the United States), but can be more active than the Catholic Church in efforts to regulate behavior within communities (as in the United States).

These are, of course, generalizations. Even within each denomination, there are variations. Evangelicals and especially Pentecostals in Latin America are becoming influential in policy circles (e.g., successfully opposing legislation in Brazil—see Marsiaj in this volume), not just in household affairs (Miller Llana 2007). Some Catholics are becoming more outspoken against homosexual behaviors, part of the worldwide trend toward a conservative approach to sexuality and reproductive rights—the so-called pelvic issues (Allen 2008).

On the other hand, in some countries, Catholic parishes are moving in the opposite direction: becoming less interventionist in public policy, less concerned with topics of sexuality relative to other issues, and/or less institutionally strong in terms of influencing politics. Officially, the Catholic Church condemns homosexual behavior, but even the conservative Catholic Church in Chile, for instance, offers assistance for gay AIDS patients. Often the Catholic Church, worried as it is about defections among parishioners, is not eager to condemn Catholic individuals, even if they strongly ignore Catholic doctrines.

This ambiguity on the part of the Church's opposition may partly explain why Latin America's predominantly Catholic countries do not officially criminalize, or in some cases recently decriminalized, homosexual acts in their civil codes (Panama was the last country to decriminalize homosexuality), whereas a majority of predominantly Protestant countries—mostly in the English-speaking Caribbean basin—ban homosexuality, following their Anglo-Saxon Common Law tradition, which includes an antisodomy norm: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada,

Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago (Ottosson 2008; see Wilets in this volume).

This legal difference between Hispanic America and Anglo-America might have to do with different historical legal traditions (see Wilets in this volume). A stereotype describes Latin America as having a powerful tradition of machismo and homophobia in comparison to more tolerant societies in Europe and Anglo-America. Some historiographies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also portray Latin America as intolerant. However, the sexual legislation of Latin America tended to be more liberal than in the United States and Northern Europe, because antisodomy codes were entrenched in Anglo-Saxon legal traditions. In contrast, following the Napoleon Code, most Latin American countries decriminalized homosexuality during the nineteenth century. The antisodomy laws of Northern Europe and the United States had no parallel in Hispanic America. The police still persecuted LGBT expressions (see Ben in this volume), but perhaps did so to a lesser extent.

Latin Americans' choices related to contraception and/or premarital sex have shown that many people tend not to follow their church's prescriptions, so it is incorrect to assume that religion in Latin America is an insuperable damper on LGBT rights. For example, while the Catholic Church opposed same-sex civil unions in Buenos Aires, the bill passed nonetheless (see Saavedra 2004). In some cases, pastors and priests provide comfort, and even empowerment, for many nonheterosexual worshippers. Churches in large Latin American countries appear to be part of the double standard that characterizes Latin America in terms of sexuality and reproduction (Shepard 2000).

Nevertheless, most scholars agree that churches often serve as veto players, objecting to nonheteronormative behaviors, if not in a person's life, at least in the policy realm. In sum, the rise of sexual issues into the political arena is shaped by the degree of separation between the Church and the state, and this is still too abstract in many Latin American and Caribbean nations.

The Party-Movement Divide

LGBT movements—because of their small constituencies, the multiplicity of closets, the prevalence of rival (economic) struggles, and the strength of opponents—are in dire need of strong political allies. On their own, they lack sufficient bargaining leverage to change policies and practices. On the face of it, political parties seem to be the obvious candidates for political alliances. Because parties on the right, across most democracies, are typically unwilling to serve as allies of LGBT causes, most LGBT movements gravitate toward leftist parties (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). However, in Latin America, cooperation between LGBT movements and leftist parties has not been easy to accomplish, as many articles in this reader discuss (especially Marsiaj). In the 1980s,

for instance, some Sandinista supporters were lesbians and gays, but they were not allowed to form a group or march openly (see Thayer, Babb in this volume). In 1999, Venezuela's constituent assembly rejected a proposal to insert a constitutional ban on LGBT discrimination while the assembly was dominated almost entirely by leftist, pro-Chávez delegates (see Merentes in this volume). In Ecuador in 2008, there were divisions within the very same movement that was advocating progressive changes (see Xie and Corrales in this volume). Feminists also have problems forging alliances with leftist parties. In 2008, for example, the Uruguayan president from the leftist *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front), Tabaré Vázquez, vetoed an abortion law approved by the congress.

Scholars recognize that in Latin America, social movements and parties historically have had a difficult time finding mutually acceptable forms of collaboration (Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley 2003). However, the tensions between organized parties of the Left and LGBT (and feminist) movements seem to be stronger than those between the Left and other social movements. This party-movement divide contrasts sharply with Spain, where the leading leftist party, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), established a close alliance with the LGBT movement in the late 1990s, a key reason that Spain became one of the few European countries to enact LGBT marriage legislation in 2005 (Calvo 2007). For Latin America, in contrast, scholars document real hostility from leftist parties toward LGBT movements. In many instances, leftist parties have actually condemned, not just excluded, LGBT demands.

The 1985 Brazilian-American film *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, based on the novel by Argentine author Manuel Puig, depicts the relationship between inmate Molina, a gay, transgendered man, and his cellmate, Valentín, a conventional, macho revolutionary leader, and could be seen as a statement on the divide between LGBT movements and the traditional Latin American Left. In the movie, Molina shows no interest in revolutionary affairs, one could even say in politics; Valentín shows utter disdain for Molina's concerns, and even perpetrates an act of homophobic aggression. Although the movie concludes with a dramatic rapprochement between the two characters, in real life, rapprochements between LGBT movements and leftist forces have been less predictable.

One reason why leftist and populist parties have been less sympathetic to LGBT groups is that many of these parties aspire to become catch-all parties, and thus prefer to avoid polarizing issues that seem to matter only to a generally "tiny minority." Another reason is that LGBT movements have resented being lumped together with other forms of social vindication, because they feel that becoming one more group in a larger coalition of progressive forces dilutes their visibility and thus threatens one of their central demands: social recognition for their difference.

A third reason is that activists on the Left have historically focused on social class issues, which they deem to be the central issues within any capitalist system, and thus

treat LGBT rights as secondary (or even petit bourgeois) concerns. The Cuban government itself, the flag bearer of the radical Left in Latin America, has a well-documented history of repression (in the 1960s), prosecution and expulsion (in the 1970s), and seclusion (in the 1990s) of LGBT citizens, often justified with a rhetoric of valuing the protection of the proletariat nation above any other nonclass interest (see Ocasio, Larson in this volume). Furthermore, in terms of political rhetoric, male leaders on the Left have historically used a macho style of imagery and vocabulary to discuss issues like nation building, consciousness raising, and guerrilla warfare, which reifies heteronormativity and homophobia (see Bejel, Ben in this volume). In relation to sexuality, therefore, members of the Left have sometimes been as reactionary as their right-wing counterparts. The difficulty that LGBT movements experience in forming strong alliances with large leftist parties is one reason that these movements rely heavily on forming alliances with other social movements (e.g., human-rights movements) or small and new parties.

Perhaps one of the most positive developments of the 2000s is that this historical animosity between leftist parties and LGBT movements has somewhat abated in some countries. Some of the most important legal accomplishments of LGBT movements in Latin America have come following close political collaboration with leftist or populist parties (see Vianna and Carrara in this volume). In June 2008, the president of Brazil, leader of the Workers' Party, launched a conference to promote LGBT rights, a first for any head of state in the world (see President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's opening speech in this volume). Even in Cuba, crucial members of the ruling party, such as Raúl Castro's own daughter, are making inroads on behalf of LGBT rights (see Haydulina in this volume). In short, although leftist parties are inconsistent or hesitant in their support for LGBT demands and still harbor lingering homophobia, the situation is changing.

The Future: Democratization, Globalization, and the Paradox of Coming Out

We can now summarize some of the conditions that lie behind the late and uneven bloom of LGBT issues in Latin America relative to the United States, Canada, and many European countries. First, at the individual level, LGBT youths stay in their original households for much longer, confronting a homophobia that can be so intense that it hinders coming out and self-acceptance; LGBT youths also find more numerous and more comfortable closets after they leave their original families, and this too hinders coming out. Second, at the structural level, other political and economic priorities, such as the needs to fight authoritarianism and settle human-rights abuses, to institutionalize democracy, and to solve macroeconomic problems, dominated the agenda

in the 1980s and 1990s. Third, at the institutional level, both organized religion and organized party life pose problems. The Catholic Church acts as a strong policy veto player, while Protestant churches attempt to regulate private behavior. The party-based problem consists of a historical aversion on the part of Latin America's leftist and populist parties to embracing postmaterialist social movements in general, and LGBT demands in public.

The future of LGBT politics in Latin America will depend, therefore, on the future of the struggle against each of these obstacles. LGBT movements, like all minority movements, benefit from allies and safe spaces. A crucial start is the household: parents (and neighbors) could become less homophobic. Simultaneously, closets could become less comfortable and available. Material conditions—of countries, communities and individuals—could continue to improve to make room for postmaterialist demands in the nation's national agenda, although it is not automatic that gay rights rise with rising incomes. Organized religion could become more pluralistic and tolerant (just as it has become in its response to divorce, premarital sex, and interracial marriage), and the separation of churches and state could become more concrete. Courts and security forces could become less homophobic and better enforce anti-discriminatory protections. And finally, political parties and other social movements could become stronger allies of LGBT movements, since, alone, LGBT movements lack sufficient leverage to influence politics. Furthermore, we should not forget that LGBT causes encompass diverse (and dissimilar) realities related to sexual orientation and gender identity, intersecting with class, race, ethnicity, language, and other potential sources of social oppression.

In short, the future of LGBT movements depends on the very same factors that determine the quality of democracy elsewhere: individual empowerment, structural conditions, and institutional quality. Furthermore, progress in one dimension will not guarantee progress in other dimensions, although deficiencies in a cluster of these dimensions normally lead to deficiencies in all others (Diamond and Morlino 2004).

The evolution of LGBT politics depends not just on the extent to which obstacles diminish, but also on the extent to which the forces that propel LGBT rights gain strength in the region. Perhaps the most powerful of such forces is globalization. LGBT movements in Latin America are not strongly opposed to globalization, the way so many progressive social movements in developing countries tend to be. Some LGBT movements express profound reservations about the commodification of LGBT culture, but many others welcome globalization, learning to use the resources provided by globalization and local-global markets to sharpen their own strategies and enhance their bargaining leverage at home (see Moreno, de la Dehesa, and Green in this volume).

LGBT movements, for instance, use traditional and new media such as the Internet to actively monitor—and adapt to local circumstances—the strategies adopted by LGBT movements elsewhere on the planet (see Brown, Friedman in this volume). As

far back as Cuba prior to the 1959 revolution, LGBT people welcomed tourism as an economic force that can turn both the state and the business sector more LGBT friendly. LGBT groups have learned that demonstrating (even exaggerating) the spending power of LGBT people allows them to earn allies in business and government.

Migration, another component of globalization, continues to serve as an exit opportunity, albeit a costly and traumatic one. Likewise, the return of emigrants to their home countries, and the close contacts kept with emigrants who are abroad, serve as an information bridge, a mechanism through which international ideas and trends get transmitted to Latin America (see Babb in this volume). Latin American universities have also become more globalized, accepting more exchange students, hiring more international faculty, participating in regional and international research collaborations, and forging ties with academic institutions in Europe and the United States, all of which helps inject more acceptance in places of study. Likewise, courts and lawyers in Latin America embrace “transnational jurisprudence” to a greater degree than do those in the United States. Judges and legal experts (not just economists and technopols) are fairly accustomed to the notion of “importing and exporting” knowledge, expertise, precedent, and evidence, first from Europe and now from the United States and their own neighbors (Domínguez 1997; Dezalay and Garth 2002). All of this helps spread nonheteronormative values in Latin America.

LGBT movements are thus beneficiaries and exploiters of globalization forces, and this is encouraging news for Latin American LGBT citizens. After Asia, Latin America—especially its largest cities and most educated population centers—often scores highest on most indices of globalization. The more globalized portions of Latin America have a higher chance of becoming more hospitable to LGBT politics.

Despite this long list of region-specific factors that favor or hinder LGBT rights, we must conclude on a more sobering note. The LGBT movement worldwide will always be haunted by one special problem endemic to all movements dedicated to fighting on behalf of minorities. Let’s call this the paradox of success: when these movements achieve any type of success in lessening levels of discrimination, they may paradoxically also lessen the extent to which people outside the movement feel that the issue remains problematic and thus worthy of more attention. With any new victory, citizens can feel that the war, rather than the battle, has been won. This can end up creating obstacles or complacency, neither of which is conducive for future progress.

The paradox of success for LGBT rights is therefore that as more progress is achieved, the struggle for LGBT rights becomes both easier and harder. It becomes easier because, as we argued in the beginning, the creation of more comfort zones helps LGBT citizens to engage in collective action on behalf of their rights, creating a snowball effect that makes non-LGBT people more accustomed to this type of citizenship diversity. But it also makes progress harder in that the expansion of comfort zones may make the cause appear less urgent to non-LGBT people. More alarmingly, growing

comfort zones might actually make homophobes sharpen their attacks by making homophobes more aware of their targets. Just as comfort zones encourage LGBT citizens to come out and act collectively, they can draw out homophobic sentiments as well. For many members of society, therefore, an isolated victory for LGBT groups might appear sufficient, or even excessive. For LGBT people, who are keenly aware of the scale of heteronormativity in all societies, no victory is ever final or irreversible. For LGBT movements worldwide, not just in Latin America, convincing all citizens of this latter point may very well be the highest hurdle of all.

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PART I

Nation-Building and Heteronormativity

